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AUTHOR Mallett, Sandra-Lynne J.
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ABSTRACT

"The Horse Dealer's Daughter" is usually taught as being about love's redeeming power. Usual interpretations of this story, however, ignore its title. It is also about a woman who discovers and uses her sexual power. To begin discussion, students are asked how many have ridden a horse and whether they have ever bought or sold a horse at auction. Then Mabel's predicament is discussed--her father has just died, and her options are to babysit for her sister or to find a husband. Using the technique of an imaginary flight over the story's landscape, students can enter into Mabel's mind. She picks out an eligible doctor, Fergusson, and exerts all her forces to marry him. Will they live happily-ever-after? Both people in this romance are needy--the doctor sees Mabel wade into a dank pond and rushes to save her. Although Fergusson is almost lost along with the unconscious Mabel, a transformation takes place where he is "merely and entirely male" and she is "merely and entirely female." Questions remain for class discussion: the animal imagery used to describe Mabel and her brothers; the symbolism of the dunking--a return to the womb for Mabel, a baptism for Fergusson; Lawrence's use of a shift in point of view--omniscient in the beginning, then from Mabel's point of view (the seller), and from the first eye contact, from Fergusson's point of view (the purchaser). A feminist appraisal would be in order for the students, and a comparison of Mabel with other pre-liberation women in literature who needed to get a husband might also clarify the meaning. (NKA)

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Sandra-Lynne J. Mallett

Some Men's Daughters: Teaching D.H. Lawrence's "The Horse Dealer's Daughter"

ED 414 592

Abstract:

This story is usually taught as being about the restorative, redeeming power of love. As a summary of one of its themes, this is only partly true. The story is about a seduction. Mabel uses all her feminine wiles, or certainly her female instincts, to get herself a husband. The usual interpretations of this story ignore its title, and if attention is paid to the title, the story's meaning becomes clear.

This interpretation includes a teaching strategy for helping students find the meaning in the story. The interpretation is presented here in much the same way as it is used in the classroom. Teachers may find this useful.

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Some Men's Daughters: 8648 words.

Teaching "The Horse Dealer's Daughter"

This story by D.H. Lawrence is prefaced in several anthologies with editorial remarks that the story is about "the redemptive powers of love." This summary of the story is only partly true. The story is about more than the power of love. It is also about a woman who discovers and uses her sexual power. While some of the questions posed in the anthologies are helpful, some almost mislead the students. The same applies to the comments in several instructor's manuals. Helping students to understand this story requires offering them a little *narratio* , and engaging students in this story requires bringing their experience to bear in an imaginative reconstruction of the text. What follows is my interpretation of the story and the approach I take in teaching D.H. Lawrence's story "The Horse Dealer's Daughter."

This story seems, at first, to be far from first year students' experience. They require a little background. Teaching this story requires offering some footnotes: explaining draft horses to some students, explaining horse dealer's tricks, and explaining the plight of women before our liberation (can any mother read Pride and Prejudice and not ache a little for Mrs. Bennet and how her concerns are mocked?). It also requires asking the students to recall the tactics they have used or seen used in romantic relationships--for some reason they need reminding of these and once they begin to recall them, the story gains relevance for them.

The story is about Mabel, an unmarried woman whose life has just been turned upside down because her father has died and left the family in debt. Mabel and her brothers must leave the family home. The horses, the stock in trade of the family are being taken in debt, and the three brothers are setting off, as in a fairy tale, for adventures in new worlds. Mabel, however, has only two possibilities: to be a skivvy in someone else's household or to go to live with her married sister--and no doubt be a skivvy there in return for room and board. In despair about her prospects, she attempts suicide and is rescued by Dr. Fergusson who falls--more as in a tumble down a flight of stairs than as in a skydiver's free fall-- in love with her,

and we can imagine the organ and church bells that would accompany a film version of this story as it concludes with promises of marriage. This story is usually taught as a sexual awakening, but what is needed is a look at how Mabel and Fergusson's sexual awakening began.

I think of our trip through the story as a flying lesson in a small plane and I use several approaches, literally, to teach this story. Like student pilots, we fly circuits to try "touch and go" landings and takeoffs before going for a little ride through the story. Teaching the story also requires a mixture of historical and psychoanalytical perspectives and a little mini drama. I like to pose several questions, with out allowing opportunities for responses, to focus our discussion. We work our way to the answers.

As a sort of flight plan, my goal in this day's flying exercise is to investigate the specific settings--the terrain-- and the plot of the story. Only a minimal flight plan is filed for the students. We will just take a quick trip through the story. The question I want to work towards is how genuinely spontaneous were Mabel's actions. Almost all texts and teacher's guides point out that Lawrence believed in living "spontaneously." He thought his own generation a bunch of stilted people, unable to loosen up and enjoy life. They were too busy with issues of "decorum" and "rules of etiquette" and "what the neighbours think" and they were too Victorian in their thinking to even enjoy sex. Fergusson, for instance, is briefly concerned at one point with what the men, Mabel's brothers, will think of his leap into marriage, but by that point, fortunately or unfortunately, he is too occupied or involved to be deterred by such thoughts. It is Mabel's actions, however, which need to be examined in regards to Lawrence's belief in living "spontaneously."

In his comments on this story in his Instructor's Handbook to his Norton Anthology of Short Stories, R.V. Cassill notes D.H. Lawrence's belief in "spontaneity" and adds that "we might look to the whole bulk of Lawrence's writing and thought" to understand Lawrence's meaning of "the 'gulf' and the 'all' that the doctor has now [at the end of the story] abandoned." (p. 109). Cassill goes on to define the gulf as "the false education and civilized manners that separate people from their natural lives"(p. 109). I'm not sure of the extent to which this

applies in "The Horse Dealer's Daughter." I'm also not sure that "The primitive (and surely Lawrence would say the best) part of [Mabel] has been exposed by her ordeal. . . . (p 108)" But the comment of Cassill's that most needs consideration is his next one: Regarding Mabel's asking Fergusson "Do you love me then?" Cassill says that "The earlier parts of the story have prepared us to understand that she is not playing a trick by asking this." Mabel isn't playing a trick at this moment, but we are not prepared to understand this all that easily, because this is a story about tricks--a whole bag of them. Cassill's note that "What is happening in [Mabel] is happening mindlessly" is true. However, behind that mindless persistence is a biological drive as compelling as any mindful plan might be--a survival instinct. Mabel is her father's daughter and she has learned a few tricks of his trade and she makes good use of them. In trying to ordering our discussion questions effectively, I work toward the question of Mabel's spontaneity. This is one question I do not ask as we begin our examination of the story.

For this story, I begin in a way that no doubt appears evasive. I prefer not to introduce our discussion with any background biographical material on Lawrence, not to consider his philosophy, not to ask the students initially to write out a plot summary (though for a study of most works of fiction a cause and effect plot summary usually establishes a lot), and not to discuss the point of view. The flight plan is my choice.

I prefer to save discussion of the story's point of view for the post-flight debriefing. "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" is two-sided. Lawrence's tactic of beginning the story at a distance so we can see Mabel's plight objectively and then shifting, half way through, to Fergusson's perspective, when he's lost perspective, when he becomes "involved" in Mabel's story, is notable. This shift in perspective is a central clue to understanding this story. Most readers note this dual -controlled point of view and interpret the story on that basis. Not only is the point of view a dual one, but the story is dual purpose. It is neither simply a love story, nor simply a story of a poor girl trapping herself a husband as a way out of her predicament. Mabel's plight needs to be considered as that of many early twentieth century women, women who lived in an era when they needed a husband for security. But the "love story" elements

need examination too. The two elements support each other. Mabel's problem, or plight, is solved because Fergusson does freely "plight his troth." In a way we are voyeurs from our bird's eye view following first Mabel and then Fergusson.

We first briefly consider the title. Like the points of view Lawrence chose, his title is a major clue to understanding the story, and one that is neglected. And it is a logical starting place for discussion. Mabel's father gets title billing in this story and this deserves attention. The question is how much does her father matter to this story? What do we learn from our fathers? My father was a dentist. One impact of this on me, thanks to hearing his lectures about taking care of my teeth, is that I dutifully pay annual visits to the dentist, and take my children. Without intending to, I also take notice of a person's teeth when I meet someone new to me. What might Mabel have learned from her father? Maybe she learned from dinner conversation how to judge a good piece of horse flesh. Mabel has a problem, is rescued, and she and Fergusson plan to marry and live happily ever after. But what is the connection of this plot to the title Lawrence gave this story? I raise this question, but I ask it only rhetorically. We work our way to the answer.

To begin discussion of this story, I ask how many students have ridden a horse. Lots of hands usually go up. (Sometimes, depending on how enthusiastic their response is, we establish that horses have different personalities--some are frisky, some are nervous, some are dopey, sneezy, grumpy. Some are easy to train to carry a rider or to break to a harness; some are skittish.) We note that the horses on Mabel's farm are draught horses, beasts of burden, work horses, and worth going out of one's way to see. We describe the grand stature (16 hands) of Clydesdales, Percherons, and Shires. At country fairs on the prairies, one can still see contests of strength with draught horses, pulling tractors or logs. Real horse power. Then I ask: Has anyone here bought or sold a horse or attended a horse auction? Usually someone answers yes. I ask those students to try to recall if any of the horse sales were later found not to be good bargains. I suggest those students can have a moment to think about this and promise to return to it in a minute. This is also a good moment to state that Lawrence uses horses in several of his

works as symbols for sexuality, as in "St. Mawr."

As we taxi down the runway and await clearance, I switch to discussing used car deals. This is like checking the weather conditions. Q. Anyone ever buy a lemon? Ever sell one? What measures does one take to try to turn a profit in selling anything? A. Wash it, tidy or dress it up. Q. What are some gimmicks used by real estate agents to sell a house? Usually students know a few of these: putting a drop of perfume on a light bulb, leaving a lamp on in the living room, trimming the lawn, etc. One student reported that no prospective buyer took a second look at her family's house until a couple came to view it while she was baking peanut butter cookies, and they bought it--signed the deal on the spot while eating the warm cookies. We're off.

At this point I return to the students who have experienced a horse auction or sale to have them tell about any less than scrupulous deals. One student said she'd paid thousands of dollars for a horse that proved unridable. Another said, rather blurting it out, that his uncle, aware that his horse had a terminal disease, had sold the horse as perfectly sound. The horse gradually declined to the new owner's dismay, and within a few months it died.

If the students can't supply any further stories, I tell a few. How and why horses are drug tested at the track daily during racing season. Students are employed and paid well to collect urine samples from the horses and a couple of RCMP do the tests each morning because drugs are used to alter horses' performance. Apparently buyers of horses are frequently easily gulled. One outrageous story was told me recently by a student. A buyer in a small city was interested in purchasing a horse, so a seller loaded his brown mare, with a white marking down its face, into his one-horse trailer and drove it to the city. The seller and prospective buyer met in the parking lot of a motel, where the horse was unloaded from the small, single-horse trailer. The buyer looked at the horse, said it looked fine, and asked the price. The seller said "I was hoping to get around $600 for her." The prospective buyer looked dismayed. "My friends told me a good horse sells for around $8 or 900." The seller turned to his friend who had accompanied him. " Take this horse back to the trailer and bring out the other one," he said.

While the seller occupied the buyer with a little small talk, the friend led the horse to the rear of the trailer, rattled the ramp a little, and returned a moment later with the same horse. The buyer quickly agreed to purchase this horse and happily handed over the cash—$800. He clearly believed, as Robert B. Cialdini notes in Influence most of us do, that "expensive equals good."

At this point we swing around and land again. On our next takeoff, we discuss ideas "in the air" in Lawrence's time. Q. Who were the major thinkers at the beginning of the century? What major ideas were in the air? A. Darwin-- the survivors of a species are those that adapt; Marx--class differences and pressures; and Freud--the notion of the subconscious, of unconscious motivations, having some control over our actions. If I suggest they think of other disciplines, the students come up with these three names. I also remark that some feminist critics do not think kindly of Lawrence's treatment or depiction of women and ask the students to ponder that idea in relation to Mabel. We save this topic for discussion later. (I like to tantalize a little—not bare all, but suggest more will be revealed.)

And up we go again. I remind them on this takeoff of a warning I issued before they read the story: to remember that it is set in England, not, for example, in Texas or Montana or the Canadian West. Q. The title: the horse dealer's daughter. Why a horse dealer? Often there is no response. Prompt: British people often use different words like "petrol" for "gas", and "boot," "bonnet" and "headlamp" for other car part names. What do we, in North America, call a person who deals in horses? If the students can't answer this, I ask, "What is the name of the weekly auto sales publication?" A. The Auto Trader. Now we are into horse trades and traders, but back we go in our circuits to used cars or "Previously owned vehicles" as a local dealership calls them. We talk about the risks in buying a used car-- that the car might have hidden undercarriage damage, that the odometer might have been turned back (one student explained that if the numbers on the odometer do not line up in an even straight line, someone has tampered with it)--unless the buyer takes precautions--has the car checked out by another mechanic, gets the name of the previous owner and call him/her, does a careful test

drive, and so on. I add that a horse deal is a final sale with no refund, no exchange.

On this circuit we consider the relationship presented in the title. Why the horse dealer's daughter? Mabel's father is not in the story. He has already died. In what way could the relationship be more important than just helping to set up a predicament for Mabel --a good manager now out of a job? Before they can answer this I tell a few very old (turn of the century) and very weak jokes--not good for a laugh, but good to make a point:

She was only a butcher's daughter, but she knew all the joints. (Note the pun relies on the British term for a roast of meat.)

She was only a mathematician's daughter, but she knew how to figure.

She was only a geometer's (any such word?) daughter, but she knew all the angles.

In desperation to avoid having to hear any more of these shabby excuses for humour, someone usually rescues the class with "Maybe Mabel knows a few of her father's tricks of the trade." (There are many of these jokes and most of them are rather salty; e.g. "She was only a vicar's daughter but she knew how to curate." A war veteran refused to share any of them with me, for fear of giving offense.)

It is worth remembering these jokes when studying Joyce's stories "The Dead" and "The Boarding House." Lily, who opens the door in "The Dead," and who has discovered, unsettling Gabriel's complacency, that "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you" is "the caretaker's daughter." And Mrs. Mooney in "The Boarding House" is, we are told at the outset, a butcher's daughter. These women are "in the know" about the ways of the world. Ibsen's Hedda Gabler is also called "her father's daughter, and in "A Doll's House" Ibsen asks if the children of Krogstad and of Nora be like their parents, as well as asking if Nora is like her slightly shady father. Like father, like daughter is the idea. It is also very likely that those old jokes were known to all three writers since the jokes were part of their time.

Why has the horse dealer's business declined? The story was first printed in 1922. Why would a horse dealer's family have slipped into poverty? A. the replacement of horses with automobiles and tractors. Mabel's father had taken another step to try to fend off poverty:

"The old man had married a second time to retrieve his fortunes." It is also possible that a few of Mabel's father's recent deals, maybe made in desperation, were less than satisfactory and his reputation has slipped too.

We are almost ready to just ride the wind. But first we must do one practice "stall of the engine." I ask who has brothers or sisters. Many do. I pick one male and ask him to think of his sister. I ask, do you always treat your sister with loving kindness? Some of the responses to this are almost alarmingly honest. I offer a scenario: you've got permission to have the family car for this Saturday night, but your sister had asked for it too. Ask her, since you should show interest, but without caring much at all, how she is going to get to work. (Most of the men in the classroom will volunteer to do this, believe it or not.) Feel a little smug and imagine spitting on the floor. Now read Joe's line.

Poor Mabel. None of her brothers really care what she does.

Engine restarted. I ask. "Who came to the university in September from out of the city and left behind your home and family?" Then, "What do you have an urge to do when you feel sad? What did you do at the end of the first week of university—when you were feeling lost on the campus and feeling alone in large crowds, paying too much for textbooks, seeing how much work you were expected to do, and wondering if you ought to be here at all?" A. Called home, if not went home. I tell them on bad days I still say, "I want my mother." I want that person who will say "There, there, it will be all right." Where does Mabel go? And, yes, before leaving town she should tidy the grave; she has a useful reason. Mabel is very close to despair. She's had fairly good times, then hard times, having had to "demean herself. . . going into shops and buying the cheapest food." But this is the lowest she has felt. No one cares what happens to her. Whatever her fate will be, when she sets off to the cemetery on "the grey, wintry day", we are told "She would not cast about her. She would follow her own way just the same. She would always hold the keys of her own situation."

No one alive cares for her, except that Fergusson, coming to say his goodbyes to her brothers, his buddies, did seem to care. Certainly, when he asked "What are *you* going to do

then, Miss Pervin?" it was with genuine concern, with sincere human sympathy. We have no reason to believe a notion has entered Mabel's mind. But reconsider her predicament a moment. Her choices are to be a babysitter in her sister's house, or, if her luck will have it, to find herself a husband.

A kindly man has just addressed her. Her reaction may be delayed but we can guess it will cross her mind to have a little sympathy for him--he's losing his buddies, suffering from a cold, and, say, isn't he a bachelor?

We're finally cruising now, and everyone is a little relaxed so I pick a female student, preferably one with long hair to conceal any embarrassment, and ask her to help me. We are about to fly over the cemetery. I ask her to kneel on the floor and keep busy picking weeds and to stay there until I call on her. If she looks ill at ease, and usually she does, the students begin to feel a little sorry for her. I draw this moment out for a bit by asking about Fergusson's circumstances. He's going to miss his buddies, he has a cold and feels rotten, he is a relative newcomer to the town, "a mere hired assistant," he has to do the more tedious chores and lives with a landlady and goes home for lunch. "The doctor's house was just by the church." Does he take lunch at the same time every day, do you think? Do doctor's offices have set hours for patients' visits? "Fergusson . . . was slave to the countryside. As he hurried now to attend to the outpatients in the surgery. . . he saw the girl. . . . " Anyone been to England? Where are many of their cemeteries? Those students who have been to England tell us that the churchyard is often on the main street. "There she always felt secure, as if no one could see her, although as a matter of fact she was exposed to the stare of everyone who passed by." Through all this, the students do not forget the poor student kneeling in the aisle. I begin walking from one part of the room, sniffling, and say I'm feeling a little sorry for myself, and it's a dull, cold day, but look, there is something or someone moving in the churchyard. (Our eyes are caught by movement--observe any one passing a television set on which a car chase or hockey game is playing.) Forlorn Mabel catches Fergusson's movement out of the corner of her eye and looks up as he approaches. (The student does likewise.) She looks up, beseechingly, the way a dog looks when

he hopes his family will let him come with them in the car. (The poor student does this well, since she wants off the floor. No one has yet protested participating in this enactment; each seems to have appreciated it was a useful exercise.) With luck, when I ask what Fergusson is feeling and thinking as he sees Mabel, the whole class does a collective "Aah!" with grand sympathy. She stooped, she conquered. Mutual sympathy has been achieved. The poor student gets to resume her chair, and I remark that love, like the common cold apparently, "comes in at the eyes."

We fly over the pond. Anyone from a small town? Yes. Think of what you know of small town life for a moment. Meanwhile, Mabel decides she has no choice, she will plod into the pond and go to her "glorification" (martyrdom?) and join her mother. Dr. F. is off "to visit cases in another part of his round." Same time every day? A. "before teatime." How would Mabel know, if she does, where Dr. F will go? Does he always go left out of the surgery and go clockwise on his rounds? Could he go to the right today instead? How do you know where he will go? I direct this question to a student from a small town. A. Mabel might know the route he will take because she has seen him in the last few days or she might know who is sick. Yes, Mrs. Thatcher has had a baby only two days before and Mr. Majors has an infection on his leg from his farming accident. Timing or coincidence? Mabel says to herself, "If I drown, fine. If I'm rescued by a knight in shining armour, fine. Whatever."

She's rescued. We've been up in the air quite a while now. It's getting late. Lights have begun to come on in all the houses below. We fly low over an acreage dipping down towards the house. Smoke is coming out of the chimney.

Mabel revives. (Lawrence is too crafty to have made her "unconscious" by accident!) The flush cast by the firelight and the flush of her blood circulating double time thanks to adrenalin and whiskey make her look vibrant or at least vital. I drape a scarf, preferably slippery material, over myself. How would Fergusson have covered Mabel? A. over the shoulders. So when Mabel sits up what happens to the blanket? Whoops—caught it. But bare shoulders. There is a perfume named "White Shoulders." Shoulders are sexy—consider

strapless gowns and peasant--off the shoulder--blouses. "Mabel, Mabel, sweet and able. . . ." Animal instinct. Sometimes at this point we swap stories about how girls behave when they flirt. (At a wedding I attended recently a pretty young girl said the cowl neck of her sweater had got stretched and she couldn't keep it up on her shoulder as she danced. A bit stretched all right.) How, by the way, does Mabel cling to Fergusson's knees and remain wrapped in the blanket at the same time?

It is almost dark. Time to return to the airstrip. Let's do a little instrument flying first. Scenario: Women, just as you come into the building one day you drop your books. A kind fellow helps you gather them up. What thought comes to mind first? Nice guy! Then what? You look at him to say thank you. Next thought? Not bad. Nice guy, and good looking. Next thought? Is he attached? (The question asked of a handsome professor by a sweet young thing after his conference presentation in dashing military attire.) The next week you try to arrive at the same time, in case he does too. (Remember going out of your way to sharpen your pencil as an excuse to walk near the fellow you liked in junior high?) You see him coming down the hall and you (women do this) lick your lips to moisten them. (There are lipsticks advertised as "giving you that just licked look.") He sucks in his stomach. (Men of any age and size do this when an attractive woman walks by.) You, in the style of shy--or maybe not so shy--Princess Di, tilt your head a little to one side, offering as much neck and open shoulder (compare to giving the cold shoulder to someone) as possible. (Women do these things--by instinct-- when they wish to indicate interest.) Alas, you merely pass each other with a small look of recognition and hasten to class. Next week, you think, maybe I will speak to him.

Find all the words in the story to do with enchantment, allure, mesmerizing, captivating, spellbound. If Mabel were a modern woman, she might read Glamour and give herself a make-over to beguile, charm. But she merely relies on the usual charms to be fetching, alluring, attractive, en-tranc-ing. To cast a glamour or spell on someone is a medieval trick with the eyes. Mabel couldn't rely on her good looks or cheery good nature to attract Fergusson, but her cocker spaniel eyes and abject humility of kneeling forlornly in a

cemetery worked. Now she kneels a second time in gratitude to her saviour. (Note that she does put on her best dress at the story's end, and that it is black. Black is the colour women wear on New Year's Eve, or for sexy dates. Coincidentally, the dress is perhaps her mourning dress for her father.)

Decide for yourselves. Did Mabel consciously or unconsciously use these subconscious feminine wiles or charms? Does she avail herself of the opportunities presented to her? Does she use charm? Mabel, "bull-dog" stubborn, sulky, sullen Mabel? Little girls learn to use charm on their fathers by the age of one. But Mabel? She is the least charming woman of any of the characters in our course. She was desperate, he was eligible, and a little needy himself. He took pity on her. "A pity beyond all telling is hid in the heart of love," says W.B. Yeats. When did Mabel realize Fergusson was eligible? Answer: when he dropped in to say a sad farewell to her brothers and, for the first time, took notice of her. Remember, he asked, politely and with concern, what Joe had asked her merely dutifully at the beginning.

"Proud", "mindless and persistent" Mabel with the instincts of an animal, stoops. She stoops; she conquers. Notice she does not use women's last resort, the "ultimate weapon" until after the Perfect Kiss--"the one kiss that is an eternal pledge." Fergusson sees one tear and embraces her to avoid having to see any more, but still feels the hot, wet tears on his cheek. Notice too that Fergusson does not recognize his own "so,low vibrating voice" when he says "I love you." (Think of how our voices change when we are having an intimate, romantic conversation. Lawrence omits nothing in the romantic details, down to the hormonal lower voice!)

My son flies a Tutor jet. The pilots call it PM--pure magic. I don't like to leave the students thinking Mabel is a manipulative woman. There is pure magic in this story. There is no help for poor Dr. F. He has been seduced-- which I define as an undermining or subverting of his will. The good doctor (and aren't all doctors knights in shining whites?) is a sympathetic, humane, service-minded physician. His immune system is weakened by a cold. He is "mortally afraid for his own health" when he realizes he, a non-swimmer, has submerged

himself in a dank, cold pond to save Mabel and risked pneumonia, a killer in those times. And now he has Mabel offering herself on her knees and clinging to him. While he may regret it in the morning, his fairy tale breaking-the-spell or sealing-with-a kiss is the stuff of true romances. Mabel's dependence, her vulnerability and gratitude make him an easy conquest.

Why does Lawrence indicate, as Cassill expresses it, that "Quickly enough the doctor realizes that in spite of the transformation he must go on living in a world that has not been transfigured. 'How they would all jeer if they knew! It was agony to him to think they might know'"(p 109). How much will he tell Mabel's brothers of what has just happened? It is important that students consider why he thinks they (her brothers, his friends from medical school, his family?) would jeer. What's wrong with falling in love with Mabel? Nothing. But what brought this on? What gave this sexual awakening its opportunity? When, exactly, does Fergusson see Mabel as a woman and not as a patient?

When Fergusson puts on the clothes Mabel throws down to him, he grins at his appearance. He is wearing the clothes of a country farmer. He likes having been brought into the earthiness of this family. Mabel "in spite of herself" smiles when she sees him so dressed and says " I don't like you in those clothes." Mabel sees her brothers as coarse, "ineffectual" (see paragraph 96), while Fergusson sees them as earthy and vital. Mabel will rise in the world's opinion, marrying a doctor. Fergusson knows he will be the butt of jokes about "the farmer's daughter."

Will this marriage last? Will they live happily every after? Does this marriage stand a chance? I remind the students that Lawrence believed in love-at-first-sight, and cross my fingers that they will agree with him. But these are practical, sensible young people, today's students, children of divorced parents, so often they reject that idea as nonsense. Alas. I tell them Lawrence had faith in it and tell them a little about his marriage. Both people in this romance are needy aren't they? Fergusson may have had his defenses lowered by his cold and losing his buddies, but he didn't feel a full part of the town, envied the life of the common workers, felt on the margin, felt the life return to him (twice--as opposed to Mabel's once).

When exactly did these two revivals occur? When he looked into Mabel's eyes. (Notice that her first look at him, her habitual look, unnerved him.) He had been thinking that he needed to "get a life." And there she was. She will be a good wife, grateful forever, a good housekeeper, cook, manager of the budget—she's had a lot of experience. He will be the steady provider she needs. Why not a good chance? And both of them have just had a bite out of the apple. Yes, sex. The very idea is stimulating. For both of them. A physical awakening occurred here. Imagine the scenario: a successful rescue (adrenalin rushes); a fire in the fireplace; Mabel, on her knees, naked, clinging to her saviour, looking up at him imploringly. Sex suggests itself under much less provocative circumstances.

Cassill sums this up: "When the doctor sees her wade into the cold, dead pond of course he rushes to save her. It is the decent, humane, and practical thing to do, quite consistent with his ideas of duty. But what happens to him in the pond where he is almost lost along with the unconscious girl happens without any respect for ideas of duty or any other ideas of any sort. A transformation takes place that brings them into a confrontation where he is merely and entirely male, she merely and entirely female." Whether the physical transformation happened in the pond, as Cassill suggests, or after Mabel was revived, this physical recognition was obvious when Mabel was on her knees.

As we touch down, I tell the students the odds are that some of them will choose a mate because they feel sorry for the person-- they will play the role of social worker, nurse, mother or father. And some of these will be long and satisfying relationships. Others will marry strong, confident, talented, sociable, almost self-sufficient people because they see the chink in the armour, the weakness, the vulnerability at the heart and wish to think, "I will be there for you when you need me."

Taxiing down the runway, I ask has Mabel made a good deal for herself? Has Dr. F? Has he merely traded her brothers' company for hers? Is she her father's daughter? Did Mabel employ a trick when she said, "You love me then?" What ignites love? Answer: that the other person shows interest in you.

What is Mabel's last instinctively feminine concern, by the way? My hair, oh it's too awful. It stinks of the slough and I must look a sight. You can't love me, you can't. But he does. And what about that last line? "'No, I want you, I want you,' was all he answered, blindly, with that terrible intonation which frightened her almost more than her horror lest he should not want her." "The look of love alarms," says William Blake. The look of Passion can be frightening. And, as my colleague Marian Allen noted, maybe her trick has worked too well. Maybe that's what frightens her. All sales are final, no refunds, no exchanges here. Mabel has been promised marriage--a promise no self-respecting man of his time would dare to break. (Breach of promise was cause for a lawsuit.) We can tie down our plane and file our flight log. We've had a grand flight, completed an exercise, and enjoyed the pleasures of soaring at the same time.

Other questions remain to be discussed, in our debriefing: the animal imagery used to describe Mabel and her brothers (why is she a mere bulldog, when her brothers are beasts of burden or of use? Note that Malcolm is described as having a snout --a museau.) In her article "'The (Boar)ding House': Mrs Mooney as Circe and Sow," Barbara McLean notes the pig imagery in that story. Lawrence settles for horses, serviceable sturdy draft horses. He settles for a bulldog of a woman who is in need of a husband for security. We also consider the reason the title is generic, a no-name one, and not Mabel's specifically. We examine the symbolism of the dunking in the pond--a return to the womb for Mabel, a baptism for Fergusson. We need to consider carefully Lawrence's very clever use of a shift in centered consciousness point of view, to note that the beginning of the story is omniscient, the next section is from Mabel's point of view (the seller) and from the meeting of their eyes in cemetery scene to the end, the point of view is Fergusson's (the purchaser). This is a remarkable shift, from the perspective of the seller to that of the purchaser who has been sold and believes himself to have struck a good bargain. We need to do a feminist appraisal of the story--to consider if Lawrence is hard on Mabel, whether we could use this story to defend Lawrence against charges that he is a misogynist, and to try to define what love is to D. H. Lawrence (Communion). We also need to

consider the effects of the class structure(does it matter that Mabel will be marrying "up" and Fergusson marrying "down"?) and double standard. Why does Lawrence include the details of "the women in the kitchen might have bad reputations" and that Mabel's brothers "might have illegitimate children"?

Cassill's remark that Fergusson crossed the gulf to a fuller, more natural life needs discussion. In Lawrence's era, many of the middle and upper class men were "stiff-necked stuffed shirts." They wore heavily starched collars, believed that "breeding tells"--meaning education and blood lines and manners. Women believed this too. A woman who lived with literally red-necked out -doorsy men might not be quite so fussy and tidy about her hair being down, literally, so Mabel might have had appeal just doing the dishes. She'd look lively rather than sedate and demure. Fergusson envied the men who laboured, using their muscles, but he was from another class, the starched gown he wore in his clinic restricted his physical self as did his Sunday suit. Clearly for Lawrence loosening up the shirt collars, removing the studs and cuff links and watch chains, and the equivalent for women of removing the hat and hairpins and letting their long hair down is a part of abandoning the superficial. Women, in the day of the story, were shortening their skirts, heading into the twenties and a little ankle could be shown without appearing to be daring and defiant. Note that Fergusson as he "relentlessly" watches Mabel ascend the stairs, takes note of "her feet and her white leg."

Lawrence believed in living "spontaneously." We can understand this idea by just thinking of the times in our lives when we respond to something as we feel about it--not to please someone else, and not to avoid displeasing someone else. He's not talking about "letting your anger out" as when a motorist who's had someone cut in in front of him then tailgates another. He's talking about the moments when we do not behave as is expected by others in our various roles, but let ourselves respond--presumably nonaggressively. What behaviours in this love story are examples of responding spontaneously? Immanuel Kant wrote that "Life is the faculty of spontaneous activity, the awareness that we have power." It is possible that Lawrence had this in mind.

Cassill writes, "The doctor has given up the superficial definitions of himself as doctor and man, has allowed himself to be redefined (or transfigured) as a primarily physical being. He can know himself truly by his response to the woman and her offer of physical love." Given that Lawrence believed in "love at first sight" and that Fergusson's need for a friend and mate is a genuine need and that he and Mabel have both tugged at the heart strings of the other, to what extent does the above about Fergusson's superficial definitions of himself apply? Would he have dived in over his head to rescue Mabel and risked his life if his self-definition were merely superficial? Isn't the kiss a sexually awakening moment for both of the characters?

Finally we need to compare Mabel with other pre-liberation women we've met in literature who needed to get themselves a husband (Faulkner's Emily who tarnished her reputation by closing the door, unchaperoned, to her house while keeping company with Homer, Lizzie and Mrs. Borden in Sharon Pollock's "Blood Relations", James Joyce's Polly in "The Boarding House" and her mother's shotgun (cleaver) marriage arrangement, Mrs. Bennet and her daughters in Pride and Prejudice.)

"The Horse Dealer's Daughter" is particularly worth comparing to Joyce's story "The Boarding House." That story, written in 1914, is about a mother who shares the plight of Austen's Mrs. Bennet. Mrs. Mooney must marry off her daughter before the young thing can have her reputation besmirched. Conveniently, Mrs. Mooney is a butcher's daughter. And she's been a butcher herself. Mrs. Mooney knows her cuts of meat. She can size up a carcass and she knows where to make the first cuts and how to proceed efficiently. She keeps her knives sharpened. As Fritz Senn notes in "The Boarding House" Seen as a Tale of Misdirection"(_ James Joyce Quarterly, 1986), Joyce's story relies on the reader filling in the gaps. We see none of the heavy action. We make inferences about what occurs in the night upstairs. We assume what Mrs. Mooney will say to Mr. Doran in their little chat. We assume what will follow. And as Senn points out, we may assume too much. It is possible poor Polly's reputation will be tarnished just because she has been seen with Mr. Doran while she was in her nightclothes. Whether anything more daring occurred, is immaterial. Polly's situation is

similar to that of Faulkner's Emily. Emily rode out with Homer and then had the audacity to take him to her house and close the door, unchaperoned. The townspeople make assumptions, perhaps their only correct ones, because Emily did unwisely, though perhaps purposefully, leave herself open to gossip. Emily's cousins try to force the issue. But they haven't the clout to do what Polly's mother has her cleaver ready to accomplish.

Lawrence's Mabel would understand Mrs. Mooney. Both women can recognize good breeding stock. Mabel's situation has some likeness to Polly's and Emily's. She needs a good provider, who will not only keep her financially secure but will also give her social status. Emily's last chance led her to go so far as to "fall." Polly "had to get married." Mabel doesn't have to go so far. Mabel will find the world a trial without her family and she knows it. Her brothers spit out the bad taste their duty to her causes them. She seems to have only two choices. She will be a burden to her sister and an unpaid maid and nanny or she will be a paid servant in some stranger's household. She's suffered one come down in the world already in the decline of the family fortunes, and she'd rather sink in the pond than sink any further. One man asks her with sincere regard what she is going to do, and she senses a possible alternative. Lawrence makes clear that no pushy stage mother is needed for a twenty-eight-year-old woman. Mabel has managed a household for ten years. She can manage her own affairs. She won't even need to rely on her brothers to ensure standards of propriety are met. She is, after all, a horse dealer's daughter.

Mabel's story is both a con– a horse deal– and a legitimate love story. Mabel seduces Fergusson with all the horse trading tricks she knows. Her knowledge of these things is almost innate. Feminine wiles are instinctive. Mabel has a barnful of them. Her animal instincts arouse Fergusson's. She's an heir to the tricks of the trade; her father knew horseflesh. Lawrence establishes that Mabel will take some kind of action, is prepared to die rather than become a skivvy, paid or unpaid, and will lower herself to her knees at least and failing that sink herself in the pond, though she has a small hope that the sympathy she heard and saw might come to her rescue. Then Lawrence turns his attention to an almost equally needy man. The

second half of the story is Fergusson's. And it is a "falling" in love story. Fergusson falls. Off his high horse. Head over heels. Almost drowns in it. Note that the first kiss is "the one kiss that is an eternal pledge." Note that the second, asked for, makes him angry. He needs her almost more than she needs him and that's not easy to accept. He knows he's already taken the bit.

Lastly, we discuss the question: If you save someone's life, who owes whom a debt? (The answer surprises most students: that if we take responsibility for someone's life, we owe that person a lifelong debt, not the other way around.)

Teaching this story is a pleasure if one footnotes it as it requires for today's students. Cassill writes: "If this story does not seem paradoxical to most students, it will mean they are not getting it at all. It is paradoxical that love could be born so contrarily to the intents of the personalities involved." But there is no paradox in Mabel's intentions. Students should have no difficulty understanding Mabel's "Do you love me then?" if they have been a little prepared to understand the story's contexts.

(Most anthologies must rely on the same early edition of the story,since most use, within the story,two spellings of Fergusson.)

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Appendix:

Horse Trading Notes to Accompany "The Horse Dealer's Daughter"

Some horses are more ridable than others, some "go into harness" more readily than others. America is sometimes said to be founded on horse trading--selling something to make a profit. Horse traders, like used car salesmen, sometimes use tricks to dupe or sting a buyer. These tricks are especially used at auctions and in private sales by people wishing to get rid of an unsatisfactory horse.

The following are some tricks, courtesy of Darwin Matkea, which have been used and are still used today in Alberta.

--an old horse's teeth are filed down with a carpenter's rasp (horses, like people, get "long in the tooth" as they age--the gums recede, the teeth do not continue to grow)

--drugs, "downers". A small amount, say 7 grams, of a tranquilizer is administered. If the buyer is aware and alert, he will notice the ears will bend and droop a little, the horse's eyes will be glassy, and it will sweat. Even a small dose will cause the horse to sweat on the side of its neck.

--drugs, "uppers" or steroids are administered for pep. A sugar dose is effective for 72 hours.

--an unhealthy coat can be "doctored" by shampooing it, brushing it, fluffing it, and adding a little motor oil to make it shine and to make it feel healthy.

--Vaseline is applied around the eyes and on the nose.

--bald spots are spray painted with model paint.

Tricks, courtesy of Jennifer Hidson.

1. If a horse is not quite small enough to be a pony, that is, 14.3 hands, sellers will often try ways to make it smaller. For example, they will trim its hooves very short and put on very thin shoes. Another good trick they'll use if they know the horse is to be measured is to have a heavy person ride the horse in the auction ring. They also will have taught the horse to drop its shoulders when someone approaches with a measuring stick.

2. A drug is injected in a horse's neck so that the horse will not pull down on a person's hands while he/she is trying out the horse.

3. If the horse is very energetic, the seller will work it very hard the day before and the morning the prospective buyer comes to see it.

4. If the horse is sluggish, the seller can give it an iron supplement that is sold in stores called Red Glow or a prescribed vitamin supplement.

5. To make the horse's coat seem shiny, the seller will bath the horse, work it so it sweats a little.

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leave a blanket on it, then brush the horse and spray it with Glow Shine and put baby oil in its tail to make it shine.

A friend bought a horse for $4000 with the idea that it was a race horse, but all it was good for was for a child's pony ride.

William Faulkner has a fictional character use a bicycle pump to inflate a scrawny horse to make it appear healthy. Darwin says this has been done here. (Veterinarians actually use this technique with a syringe to move a bubble of air on a horse. Why I don't know.)

One story of "just desserts" was told to me recently by a cowboy and farmer near Westlock, Mel Kroetsch. A man in the Westlock area sold an almost unridable, intractable black horse as a ridable, gentle horse. When the buyer learned he had been duped, he dyed the horse's white ankles with hair dye, so that the horse seemed completely black, and offered it for sale to the original buyer, who bought it back not realizing it was the same horse he had just "unloaded" weeks earlier!

Note: This term, after we had studied this story, one of my students, a pert young woman was grinning to herself in the back row as the class began. With about twenty minutes of class left, she began to fidget. Before I had finished my last sentence and closed my book, she was out of her chair and making a beeline for the door. The next day before class, she asked if she might leave a few minutes early. I asked her if there was someone special taking classes in one of the rooms down the hall. With only the slightest blush, she said yes. She was hoping to be "at the ready" should the nice fellow pass our classroom again. She hoped to meet him. "You understand Mabel's story, don't you?" I said. "Oh, yes," she said.

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